



SENATOR ROBERT D. GARTON

serving district 41: bartholomew and johnson counties

200 W. Washington Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 • www.in.gov/S41

2005 Legislative Session Will Produce Solutions for Indiana

January marked the beginning of more than just a new calendar year — it marked the beginning of a new legislative session as well. Governor Mitch Daniels articulated his goals for the state of Indiana during his campaign, and now the legislature must begin the process of seeking public input and enacting some of these proposals.

Indiana faces a large structural deficit and a state government infrastructure that is burdened with wasteful spending and a history of scandal. The anticipated changes from Governor Daniels include a mix of consolidation, conformity and cost-cutting measures.

Recent problems in the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and Family and Social Services Administration, or FSSA, underscore the immense need for a drastic overhaul of the current system. You can expect sweeping changes to be made in both FSSA and the BMV.

Some proposed changes in FSSA ready for consideration include the creation of a separate agency dealing exclusively with Child Protective Services. The governor also plans to investigate ways to consolidate the functions performed by the Department of Workforce Development into FSSA's existing job placement and training programs.

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Legislators also plan to review the overall efficiency of government services in order to find ways to cut costs. The Legislature created the Government Efficiency Commission in 2003 to find ways to improve state government. The commission investigated all areas of government and presented a wide-range of proposals this fall.

Suggestions include the reorganization of Medicaid, relieving the growth of offender populations in the state prison system by releasing offenders who no longer pose a threat to society, and further restructuring long-term care services toward community-based services and away from nursing homes.

Though the budget and government restructuring will dominate much of the discussion during this session, other important issues will be considered. Last year, a great deal of the debate centered on the introduction of an amendment banning same-sex marriages, and a similar amendment will be introduced this year. Voters in 11 states overwhelmingly supported such amendments during the November election.

I look forward to working this session to bring your concerns and viewpoints to the Statehouse.

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upcoming events in the indiana statehouse

- January 10 — Inauguration of Governor-Elect Mitch Daniels
- January 18 — Governor's annual "State of the State" address
- January 18 — Last day senators may file bills
- January 19 — Supreme Court Chief Justice's annual "State of the Judiciary" Address

key information about the indiana senate

